

Message Text

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ACTION EA-06

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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 24535

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP (CHATCHAI CHUNHAWAN, FOREIGN MINISTER), PFOR, EAID,
MARR, MASS, TH, US

SUBJECT: SUBJECTS THAT MAY SURFACE IN CHATCHAI'S CALL ON THE
SECRETARY

REF: A. STATE 273627; B. BANGKOK 23812; C. BANGKOK 23068

D. BANGKOK 24298 (DAO BKK IR6 895 0526 75); E. BANGKOK 24337

SUMMARY: THAI FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI WILL BE LOOKING FOR
A BROAD OUTLINE OF U.S. INTERESTS AND INTENTIONS IN SOUTHEAST
ASIA IN GENERAL AND THAILAND IN PARTICULAR DURING HIS FORTHCOMING
MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY. IT WILL BE HELPFUL IF THE SECRE-
TARY CAN RELATE OUR SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS IN THAILAND TO OUR
OVERALL GOALS FOR THE AREA. WE ARE NOT AWARE THAT CHATCHAI
PLANS TO BRING AN AMBITIOUS SHOPPING LIST, BUT CANNOT RULE OUT
THE POSSIBILITY. END SUMMARY.

1. WE HAVE DISCUSSED WITH CHATCHAI AND VARIOUS MFA OFFICIALS
THE OBJECTIVES OF CHATCHAI'S NOVEMBER 26 VISIT TO WASHINGTON
FOR TALKS WITH THE SECRETARY. AS USUAL IN TALKS WITH THE
FOREIGN MINISTER, THINGS ARE NOT EXACTLY CRYSTAL CLEAR, BUT
THE FOLLOWING ARE OUR BEST VIEWS ON WHAT HE PROBABLY HOPES
TO ACHIEVE. THE AMBASSADOR HAS AN APPOINTMENT WITH
CHATCHAI NOVEMBER 21 TO DISCUSS THE VISIT FURTHER. WE
WILL REPORT ON THAT SEPARATELY.

2. THE MAIN THEMES EMERGE FROM DISCUSSIONS WITH MFA

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REGARDING MATTERS THAT CHATCHAI WILL WANT TO RAISE WITH

THE SECRETARY. ONE IS THE U.S. VIEW OF AND POLICY TOWARDS SOUTHEAST ASIA AS A WHOLE. THE THAI WANT TO KNOW WHAT WE SEEK AND WHAT WE INTEND TO DO IN THIS AREA IN THE FUTURE. THIS WILL AFFECT THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD US AND OUR RESIDUAL PRESENCE IN THAILAND. THE OTHER IS U.S. INTERESTS IN AND POLICY TOWARDS THAILAND IN PARTICULAR. CHATCHAI WILL, OF COURSE, BE PREPARED TO PRESENT HIS VIEWS ON WHAT HE WOULD LIKE TO SEE IN TERMS OF U.S. POLICY AND WHAT THAI POLICY SHOULD BE IN THE NEXT FEW YEARS.

3. WE FORESEE THAT CHATCHAI WILL MAKE A STRONG PITCH FOR AMERICAN FORBEARANCE AS THAILAND SEEKS TO READJUST ITS RELATIONS WITH THE INDOCHINA COUNTRIES, AND WITH THE COMMUNIST AND THIRD WORLD NATIONS IN GENERAL. THIS WILL INCLUDE ASKING OUR UNDERSTANDING WHEN THAILAND TAKES POSITIONS AT VARIANCE WITH OUR OWN ON INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS SUCH AS KOREA AND ZIONISM. IN THE INDOCHINA CONTEXT, CHATCHAI MAY ASK FOR FLEXIBILITY OR POSTPONEMENT OF A DECISION ON THE DISPOSAL OF THE REMAINING LAO AIRCRAFT IN THAILAND. HE MAY WANT TO KEEP ALL OF THEM IN THAILAND EITHER TO LET THEM DECAY INTO USELESSNESS OR AS A BARGAINING COUNTER WITH THE PGNU AT SOME POINT. WE DOUBT HE WILL PRESS FOR THE RETURN OF THE AIRCRAFT TO LAOS, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF CURRENT THAI-LAO TENSIONS.

4. IN THE CONTEXT OF CURRENT BORDER INCIDENTS ALONG THE MEKONG, CHATCHAI MAY ALSO ASK FOR AN EMERGENCY SUPPLY OF A-37 SPARE PARTS TO ENABLE THE THAI TO MAKE USE OF THESE AIRCRAFT IN CLOSE SUPPORT. PRESENTLY THAILAND'S A-37'S, THEIR BEST AIRCRAFT FOR THEIR IMMEDIATE NEEDS, ARE INOPERABLE FOR LACK OF SPARES (SEE REF D). ALSO, HE MAY ASK FOR BETTER COMMUNICATION EQUIPMENT TO OVERCOME INTERSERVICE INCOMPATIBILITIES BROUGHT OUT IN THE RECENT MEKONG CLASH.

5. WITH SPECIFIC REGARD TO U.S.-THAI RELATIONS, CHATCHAI'S INTERESTS FALL INTO THE FAMILIAR CATEGORIES OF ECONOMIC AND MILITARY ASSISTANCE ACTIVITIES. ON THE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE SIDE, CHATCHAI WILL WANT TO KNOW OUR PROJECTED LEVELS OF OVERALL AID, AND THE PARTICULAR AREAS IN WHICH WE EXPECT TO CONCENTRATE OUR ASSISTANCE.

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6. CHATCHAI APPARENTLY IS NOT INTERESTED IN DISCUSSING THE CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS ON THE ECONOMIC AID BILATERAL, NOTWITHSTANDING HIS PUBLIC REMARKS REPORTED IN THE LAST PARAGRAPH OF REF B. IF HE SHOULD RAISE THE ISSUE, WE SUGGEST THAT THE SECRETARY PASS IT OFF WITH A COMMENT TO THE EFFECT THAT HE UNDERSTANDS THE SINGLE REMAINING PROBLEM OF DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITIES FOR DIRECT HIRE AID EMPLOYEES

IS BEING NEGOTIATED IN BANGKOK.

7. CHATCHAI WILL PROBABLY MAKE A STRONG PITCH FOR EXPANDED BILATERAL MILITARY COOPERATION. CHATCHAI WILL BE SEEKING AN OUTLINE OF OUR SPECIFIC INTERESTS IN AND INTENTIONS TOWARDS THAILAND IN THIS REGARD. IN ADDITION TO A POSSIBLE REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY SUPPLY OF A-37 PARTS, HE MAY RAISE THE POSSIBILITY OF THE U.S. AGREEING TO SELL A TURN-KEY HAND GRENADE PLANT TO THAILAND TO PRODUCE M26 AND M67 TYPE HAND GRENADES. HE MAY ALSO RAISE THE POSSIBILITY OF U.S. SUPPORT FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF AN AIRCRAFT OVERHAUL FACILITY AT U-TAPAO TO SERVICE COMMERCIAL JETS, THEREBY EMPLOYING SURPLUS SKILLED LABOR REMAINING AFTER CLOSURE OF THE U.S. ACTIVITIES AT THAI BASES AND THE THAI-AM REHABILITATION PLANT IN UDORN. AT THE VERY LEAST HE WILL WANT US TO SUPPORT THAILAND'S EFFORTS TO CONCLUDE AN AGREEMENT WITH A U.S. COMMERCIAL FIRM; HE MAY SEEK U.S. FUNDING THROUGH MAP.

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8. BASICALLY, WHAT THE THAI APPEAR TO BE LOOKING FOR, AND THIS MAY REFLECT MFA STAFF LEVEL FRUSTRATIONS AS MUCH AS CHATCHAI'S VIEWS, IS A BROAD BRUSH ELABORATION OF THE U.S. VIEW OF THE WHOLE CONTEXT OF BILATERAL SECURITY COOPERATION AGAINST WHICH THE THAI CAN THEN CONSIDER THE SPECIFIC DECISIONS THEY FACE. SEVERAL TIMES IN RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH THE EMBASSY, MFA OFFICIALS HAVE MENTIONED THAT THE U.S. ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE OVERALL THAI-U.S. RELATIONSHIP WILL HAVE AN AFFECT ON THAI ATTITUDES ON BILATERAL AGREEMENTS AND ON THE RESIDUAL U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE

WE ARE CURRENTLY NEGOTIATING. THOUGH THESE OFFICIALS DO NOT RPT NOT SAY SO EXPLICITLY, THEY SEEM TO BE SAYING THAT TO THE EXTENT THE U.S. DECLINES TO COMMIT ITSELF TO SUPPORT THAILAND IN THE EVENT OF A SERIOUS DETERIORATION IN THE SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, THE THAI WILL ALSO DECLINE TO RUN ADDITIONAL RISKS BY AGREEING TO THE CONTINUATION OF U.S. ACTIVITIES WHICH MAY MEASUREABLY INCREASE THAILAND'S EXTERNAL SECURITY PROBLEMS. FOR EXAMPLE, OVER THE LONGER TERM, THAI AGREEMENT TO CONTINUE TO PERMIT THE OPERATION OF RAMASUN STATION MAY BE CONDITIONED ON THE U.S. CONTINUING TO PROVIDE CONSIDERABLE BILATERAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE MORE OR LESS INDEFINITELY, AS WELL AS SOME KIND OF U.S. COMMITMENT FOR BROADER SUPPORT IN THE EVENT OF A RENEWAL OF MAJOR HOSTILITIES IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

9. CHATCHAI WILL OBVIOUSLY ALSO WISH TO DISCUSS CERTAIN ASPECTS OF OUR RESIDUAL MILITARY PRESENCE. THE AMBASSADOR WILL DISCUSS THIS FURTHER WITH CHATCHAI NOVEMBER 21, AND WE WILL REPORT
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ADDITIONAL DETAILS FOLLOWING THAT MEETING.

10 ON THE POST-MARCH, 1976, U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE, IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL IF THE SECRETARY COULD PAINT THE OVERALL PICTURE OF OUR SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THAILAND POLICY FOR CHATCHAI, AND THEN DRAW THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN OUR GOALS AND THE SPECIFIC MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND FUNCTIONS WE DESIRE TO KEEP IN THAILAND.

11. IN SUM, CHATCHAI'S REASONS FOR WANTING TO MEET WITH THE SECRETARY HINGE PRIMARILY ON WANTING TO HEAR FROM THE SOURCE WHAT THAILAND'S STRONGEST AND CLOSEST ALLY HAS IN MIND REGARDING THE MANY PERILS AND PROBLEMS THAILAND SEES ITSELF FACING. HE WILL BE SEEKING REASSURANCES THAT WE WILL BOTH ASSIST THAILAND WHEN IT NEEDS US, AND AT THE SAME TIME PERMIT THAILAND GREATER FREEDOM OF MANEUVER IN WORKING OUT ITS OWN DIPLOMATIC AND SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS.

12. WE REALIZE THAT THE FOREGOING INVOLVES A LOT OF MATERIAL TO COVER IN A WORKING LUNCHEON. NEITHER NEED WE EMPHASIZE THAT CHATCHAI IS GOING ALL THE WAY AROUND THE WORLD FOR THIS ONE MEETING, AND HAS NO OTHER PROGRAM IN WASHINGTON. (FYI: IN ALL OUR DEALINGS WITH MFA OFFICIALS OVER THE SCHEDULING, THEY HAVE TOLD US THAT CHATCHAI HAS IN MIND A THREE HOUR SESSION WITH THE SECRETARY.) THOUGH CHATCHAI IS NOT AS TOUCHY AS PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT, HE IS THE ONE WITH WHOM WE MAY HAVE THE GREATEST TROUBLE IN SHAPING OUR POST-MARCH, 1976, MILITARY PRESENCE HERE. IT WILL GREATLY HELP OUR CAUSE IF HE RETURNS FEELING HE GOT AN ADEQUATE HEARING IN WASHINGTON AND A FIRST-HAND

REPORT FROM THE SECRETARY ON THE U.S. VIEW OF SOUTHEAST
ASIA IN GENERAL, AND THAILAND IN PARTICULAR.
WHITEHOUSE

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